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Security Council

Fifty-seventh year

Provisional

4518th meeting

Wednesday, 24 April 2002, 10.40 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Lavrov	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	Colombia	Mr. Rivas
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Guinea	Mr. Boubacar Diallo
	Ireland	Mr. Corr
	Mauritius	Mr. Gokool
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zinser
	Norway	Mr. Strømmen
	Singapore	Mr. Yap
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Mekdad
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eldon
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2002/436).

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2002/436)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Spain, Ukraine and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Nebojša Čović, Deputy Prime Minister of the Yugoslav constituent Republic of Serbia and President of the Coordination Centre of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Čović (Yugoslavia) took a seat at the Council table and Mr. Arias (Spain) and Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the course of the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Michael Steiner, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Steiner to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Michael Steiner, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Steiner.

Mr. Steiner: I am pleased to tell you that the United Nations operation in Kosovo under resolution 1244 (1999) has entered a new phase, allowing us to make new proposals for the way ahead.

In the period beginning June 1999, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) concentrated on the humanitarian crisis, on essential services and on stopping open hostilities, with KFOR's support. Indeed, the Kosovo where my predecessors arrived — and with great joy I see Bernard Kouchner here in the Council Chamber — looked very different from the Kosovo of today.

What has been achieved? You have seen the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General. His support has been invaluable to our work.

With respect to government, the Kosovo-wide elections in November were universally recognized as free and fair. The Assembly, the President and the multi-ethnic Government of Kosovo are now in place and working. We are building an inclusive public service. We have set aside more than 20 per cent of posts for non-majority communities and 18 per cent for Kosovo Serbs.

We have a functioning police and justice system. The crime rate has gone down steadily. There were 500 murders during the second half of 1999, 250 in 2000 and 136 last year. Since January 2002, there have been 16 murders. If this trend continues, we can expect fewer than 100 murders this year.

The economy is slowly beginning to function. More than 95 per cent of the 2002 Kosovo consolidated budget of 374 million euros is now funded with local taxes and revenues. Starting this month, people are paying income taxes. More than 50,000 businesses have been registered. There has been a four-fold increase in the rate of electricity production since 1999.

With respect to public services, social infrastructure has been rebuilt from scratch. We have more than 1,100 schools with a total of 450,000 pupils. Five regional hospitals have been refurbished and equipped. There are 360 functioning health-care facilities throughout Kosovo. As of July 2002, 130,000 pensioners will start receiving pensions.

Now we have the provisional institutions of self-government. What has changed? Until now, the Mission had a general view of where it was headed, but we did not see how it would get there. Now we can see more clearly how to structure the path. The road is not endless. We have a vision of how to finish our job.

We need to look both inside and outside. We need to transfer authority within Kosovo to the Provisional Government. We also need to convince the Kosovans to look beyond Kosovo to Belgrade and to the region.

What are our priorities? The first is reliable institutions. We now have Kosovan partners that we can work with: President Rugova, Prime Minister Rexhepi and Assembly President Daci. We need to consolidate the provisional institutions to ensure that they are effective, representative and transparent. We will make a particular effort to ensure their multi-ethnic character at all levels. The Kosovo Serbs have agreed to my proposal for their participation in the Government. They will nominate a Minister for Agriculture, as well as an Inter-Ministerial Coordinator on Returns. This is significant progress. On the local level, the municipal elections run by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) this autumn will be key. There are good reasons why the Kosovo Serbs, especially, want these elections this year.

Our second priority is to boost the economy. An unemployment rate of 50 per cent is an untenable situation. At the same time, UNMIK is downsizing. There has already been a substantial drop in donor money, and Kosovo is unable to borrow on the international markets. Getting the economic fundamentals right is therefore even more important. A key element is privatization. Privatization will not solve the problem in the short term, but it is the only basis for secure jobs in the long term. The legislation to create the Kosovo Trust Agency, which will be the vehicle for privatization, is now with the Provisional Government for comments.

The third priority is the rule of law. Effective police and judiciary are essential. We will gradually transfer policing responsibilities to the multi-ethnic Kosovo Police Force under UNMIK supervision. Let me pay tribute here to the brave policemen and women of UNMIK. The Polish Special Police recently demonstrated their dedication in an exemplary manner. We are also enhancing capabilities to effectively combat organized crime, terrorism and corruption. However, I must emphasise that as we begin to make significant arrests against the criminal gangs, we should anticipate a criminal backlash. KFOR Commander General Marcel Valentin and I stand shoulder to shoulder on maintaining order. We must count on the Council's support, especially when the going gets tough.

The final priority is returns. Now that the Kosovo Serbs will be part of the Government, we can focus more efficiently on an integrated effort to facilitate return. The years 2002 and 2003 will be decisive. We are committed to creating the preconditions for a substantial return process. Damage assessments in over 80 minority villages and urban areas have been completed. Serb returns to 14 villages and non-Serb minority returns to seven locations should commence within the next three months. The Kosovo Serbs will have their official representatives working on returns within the Government and in my office.

It is time to work on a real breakthrough in returns. But for this, I must ask for your help. When the returns start, on the basis of our integrated approach, we need to be sure that there will be money to follow the returnees. Only this way can we achieve sustainable returns.

Here I would like to make a more general point that relates to the previous one. We need to follow a dual-track approach. Multi-ethnicity and integration are the two mutually reinforcing elements here. On the one hand, the Kosovo Albanians, as the majority community, have to practice what their leaders preach — thank God. Multi-ethnicity means doing everything they can to encourage the smaller communities to stay in Kosovo and to make returns possible. On the other hand, the smaller communities have to participate in the institutions that we have set up under resolution 1244 (1999). They must integrate and abandon parallel structures. The rule of law must apply everywhere in Kosovo. This is also true for Mitrovica.

There will be no multi-ethnicity without integration, and there will also be no integration without multi-ethnicity.

Integration within Kosovo needs to be complemented by the strengthening of relations with Belgrade as well as of cooperation within the region. Just as Kosovo is a factor influencing stability within the region, relations with regional neighbours influence stability in Kosovo. I have already made my first trips to Belgrade, as well as to Skopje, Tirana and Sarajevo. We will continue to foster regional dialogue at both the bilateral and multilateral levels. Belgrade will be the crucial partner.

Finally, I turn to the question of benchmarks. I have described the priorities of my mission. The work of implementing resolution 1244 (1999) is now a joint effort with the provisional institutions.

We are transferring our responsibilities to those institutions in the process of building substantial autonomy. This will bring us closer to a stage at which it will be time to begin the political process designed to determine Kosovo's future status. This will be one of my main responsibilities, as foreseen in paragraph 11 (e) of resolution 1244 (1999).

But let me say clearly that the time for this has not yet come. Kosovo society and institutions will have to show that they are ready for this process — without prejudging its outcome. We must make clear what is expected from them. Therefore, I am embarking on a benchmarks process. These benchmarks should be achieved before launching a discussion on status, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999).

The benchmarks are: existence of effective, representative and functioning institutions; enforcement of the rule of law; freedom of movement for all; respect for the right of all Kosovans to remain and return: development of a sound basis for a market economy; clarity of property title; normalized dialogue with Belgrade; and reduction and transformation of the Kosovo Protection Corps in line with its mandate.

With your permission, Mr. President, following my statement Council members will receive a brief illustration of our thinking on benchmarks.

These benchmarks articulate our expectations of Kosovo's leaders and of the wider public. They mirror the principles and priorities in the coalition agreement signed on 28 February by political parties forming the Government. Through stimulating public debate, we can also gain broad support for needed reforms.

Attaining these benchmarks is an objective in itself. Kosovo can advance towards a fair and just society only when these minimum preconditions are met and when the changes in institutions are sustainable even without an international presence.

I offer this to the Council as an exit strategy which is, in reality, an "entry strategy" into the European integration process. The benchmarks complement the preconditions that Kosovo needs to meet to qualify for the stabilization and association process.

I rely on the support of the Security Council for this strategy. But in addition to political support, I will still need its sustained technical and financial support. This is essential in achieving our priorities. Yes, we will have to reduce our engagement, but not at a time when we should be capitalizing on our past work. I am concerned about the anticipated premature reduction in the Kosovo peacekeeping budget. Given the marathon that we have run in Kosovo since 1999, it would be tragic to falter as we are nearing the finish line.

The next stages of authority transfer will succeed only with the Council's help, and only with its backing will Kosovo be able to develop normalized dialogue and meaningful relations with Belgrade and its neighbours.

The more we invest now, the more stable, sustainable and fair a society we will leave behind. Can we afford not to afford returns? Remember: a stable Kosovo is a key to a stable region. The more support the Council gives us now, the faster we will be able to reduce spending and international personnel.

Members of the Council have visited Kosovo twice. They have seen it develop. Where there was rubble, there are now roads, schools and hospitals. Where there was anarchy, there are now democratically mandated institutions. This has been accomplished through our international presence and the funds that we have committed. I would like to invite the Council to come again and see what it has achieved.

We have to finish the job we started together. It will still take time, but this is now the decisive phase.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I give the floor to Mr. Nebojša Čović, Deputy Prime Minister of the Yugoslav constituent Republic of Serbia and President of the Coordination Centre of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija.

Mr. Čović (Yugoslavia) *(spoke in Serbian; interpretation provided by the delegation)*: Before I address the Council, I should like to extend my greetings to Mr. Kouchner, who has made a great contribution to Kosovo and Metohija in the process of the reconciliation of different ethnic groups.

There is a province on our planet where the old truth that violence always goes hand in hand with fear is being dramatically confirmed. That province is Kosovo and Metohija.

There is a bus line in Kosovo and Metohija that has no timetable. For the sake of the passengers' security, departure dates and times are unknown; so are arrival dates and times. Deputies of the Serbian coalition Povratak come to the Assembly of Kosovo and Metohija in armoured vehicles with a heavy international security detail. In the end, the actual choice of when they arrive or how long they stay in Pristina depends not on them but on the whim of KFOR and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Officials of Serbia and Yugoslavia, the State of which Kosovo and Metohija form a part, must provide information on their travel to the province three days in advance, because it takes three days to carry out the necessary preparations, checks and complex security measures. Sometimes, UNMIK and KFOR unilaterally decide that it is not convenient to do so.

Kosovo and Metohija is, therefore, the only part of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia where people cannot move freely and where insecurity and fear of violence and death have been persistently and deliberately preserved. It would be unfair to say that the current conditions are worse than those in the past. I want to emphasize right away that I genuinely and deeply respect the efforts of UNMIK and KFOR and the results that they have achieved under very difficult circumstances.

Once again, I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to express my full support for Mr. Michael Steiner and other international mediators and protectors. I want to assure the Council once again that Serbia and Yugoslavia will do everything possible to help the inter-ethnic reconciliation process in Kosovo and Metohija succeed.

We have proved our genuine intentions by normalizing relations with all our neighbours, by cooperating with the Hague Tribunal, and by having considerably improved the political environment and the inter-ethnic relations in southern Serbia, both in multi-ethnic Serbo-Albanian communities and in settlements with an Albanian majority. Of the total of 12,500 displaced persons, almost 10,000 Albanian refugees have already returned to that part of the country.

We have also proved our genuine intentions by encouraging and supporting a strong campaign for the registration and participation of Serbs in the elections on 17 November 2001, by exhumation of all mass grave sites in Serbia proper, by opening a DNA laboratory centre in Belgrade in cooperation with the International Commission for Missing People, and by the expeditious transfer of ethnic Albanian prisoners from detention facilities in Serbia proper to Kosovo and Metohija. Although we have reached and signed a precise agreement on the transfer of Serbian detainees, not a single Serbian detainee has yet been transferred from prisons in Kosovo and Metohija to prisons in Serbia proper.

I cannot fail to note a few other disturbing facts. The circulation of money made from prostitution and the trafficking in drugs, weapons and human beings has not been stopped. No steps have been taken — not even symbolic ones — to facilitate the return of a quarter of a million internally displaced persons and refugees to Kosovo and Metohija. Furthermore, the donors conference designed to address this problem has been postponed.

Before the elections in Kosovo and Metohija, when the Common Document was signed, the international community seemed to have energetically and enthusiastically advocated a plan for the expeditious return of the internally displaced and expelled. Regrettably, that enthusiasm evaporated shortly after the elections, and the new Kosovo Government has not earmarked even a single euro or dollar for the return of refugees.

Little has been done for the preservation and protection of property. Return of internally displaced individuals and refugees cannot be limited to the

territory of north Mitrovica or a few enclaves. It is essential that there be returns to cities as well and that property from which certain groups of ethnic Albanians have already made enormous profit be returned to its legal Serbian and other non-Albanian owners. Furthermore, unforgivably little has been done to clarify the fate of 1,300 kidnapped and missing individuals.

UNMIK has an historic responsibility to deal with these and other issues. It is UNMIK's duty to continue preparing ethnic Albanians for a dialogue. However, UNMIK must work with the Serbs as well, and regrettably that has not been the case. There is a democratic Belgrade, and there are democratically elected institutions of self-government in Pristina, but there is no dialogue.

I can see a logical explanation for this tragic impasse in the fact that extremism has been marginalized in all parts of the former Yugoslavia except Kosovo. The ideas of a greater Serbia and a greater Croatia have been discarded and suppressed. Yet the idea of another great, ethnically clean country in the region has been neither discarded nor suppressed: that anti-European and anti-civilization project has been preserved and strengthened in the presence of the international mediators. Extremism in Kosovo and Metohija is an extremely powerful force, and sometimes extremists themselves are in power. If that had not been the case, we would have had bilingualism, inter-ethnic tolerance, unbiased police and an independent judiciary.

Some might say that conditions that have been deteriorating for such a long time cannot be improved in a day or in a year. I agree, but I can find no reassurance when I analyse the Kosovo and Metohija of today. Sometimes, even something that seems good is not genuinely good. As reported, fewer murders and attacks on Serbs and other non-Albanians were recorded in the last year than in the year before. Unlike some of my interlocutors, I emphasize that this is only a result of the fact that Serbs and other non-Albanians have been forced to live in enclaves or ghettos and that they have learned to stay away from harm.

In the process of finding a solution to the security issue in Kosovo and Metohija, we cannot make assessments and evaluations based on the number of security incidents. Instead, we should base our assessments on progress made with regard to the level of full freedom of movement. The reduced number of attacks against the lives and the property of Serbs, Turks, Romas, Goranis and other non-Albanians has not resulted in the return of internally displaced and expelled persons. That is a direct result of the fact that UNMIK and KFOR have restricted freedom of movement and the return of refugees in order to prevent security incidents.

I am deeply concerned about the situation in Mitrovica, which is a consequence of the existential concerns of the Serbs and of profound inter-ethnic distrust. In an effort to improve further the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, we offered the head of UNMIK, Mr. Steiner, a draft agreement on the principles for solving the crisis in the northern part of that Kosovo-Metohija town. After Council members have read the draft, they will see that we base our policy and strategy on sustainable compromises and on respect for the interests of all parties to the conflict.

Solutions that have come out of improvisation and pressure have proved disastrous in the Balkans. Let us not repeat previous mistakes. Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) was not written for ethnic Albanians only, to protect only them and to improve only their position in Kosovo and Metohija; it was written for Serbs and for all other ethnic communities as well.

They say that there is no collective responsibility in the democratic world. A few Serbs are being brought to justice before international and domestic courts for crimes and injustices committed against Albanians. We have seen no signs yet that Albanians will also be brought to justice for murders of those who did not belong to their religion or ethnic group, for usurpation of their neighbours' property, for destruction of Serbian cultural heritage, or for ethnic cleansing of Kosovo and Metohija.

Albanian extremism is in a hurry to draw Kosovo and Metohija in its ethnic map as an island, isolated from the region and populated only by ethnic Albanians. Ethnic Albanian leaders, who had an alibi and an excuse for their secessionist intentions during the rule of Slobodan Milosevic, have been refusing a dialogue with the new, democratic authorities in Belgrade as well, as if they missed the old regime. You will not find a single sign in the Serbian language outside Serbian enclaves in Kosovo and Metohija, and

I am wondering whether the result of the proclaimed and expected Europeanization would look like this.

I would like to assure you that this situation does not boost democratic forces in Serbia and Montenegro; on the contrary. Individuals from the old regime now point to the situation in Kosovo and Metohia and say: that is your reward for all the tolerance you have shown and the concessions you have made.

As I have set out what we Serbs — and all the citizens of Serbia and Montenegro — do not want and are concerned about, it would only be fair to say what we do want and hope for.

We want to see an end to media stereotypes showing the Serbs as a threat to European and world peace. We acknowledge that the former regime made tremendous mistakes, and we have been trying hard to explain how difficult it is to carry this burden that we inherited from the past.

We want to see the international community's clear position that the new Kosovo and Metohija must not be built on results of ethnic cleansing and widespread criminal activities in the society. We recognize that now UNMIK and KFOR have jurisdiction over peace and stability throughout the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, and we shall take no steps whatsoever that might result in the failure of the concept of a multi-ethnic character for the province.

We will be ready to support the idea on creating entities in Kosovo and Metohija, based on the model of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but only if it is judged that this idea, used as an interim step, will facilitate the development of local self-government and the protection of minorities, as well as a considerable return of internally displaced and expellees. We will oppose it firmly if there is a generally accepted feeling that it would become an obstacle to a multiethnic character for the province and would introduce a territorial partition. We remain strong in our position, as always, against any partition of Kosovo and Metohija.

We do not want any of our neighbors to see us as a threat or danger. We want to be seen as friends, ready to help in good faith.

Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) on Kosovo and Metohija provides that the province shall be given "substantial autonomy". We do not see this "substantial autonomy" as a mono-ethnic community, divided by a high wall from the countries and the nations of the region. Such a mono-ethnic community, torn from its surroundings, would be a dangerous precedent. It would increase the insecurity and dissatisfaction of the people and the nations in the Balkans to a distressing extent. It would dramatically increase the level of insecurity and would jeopardize the ongoing and future regional and European integration.

We see this "substantial autonomy" as a part of a democratic and stable state of Serbia and Montenegro, which, integrated in the regional and European organizations and initiatives, would be the key factor and a pillar of peace and stability in the Balkans.

Recently, in two international conferences in Belgrade, I talked about the conditions that need to be met to achieve this peace that we have talked about and have dreamed about so often. I said that none of the Balkan conflicts should be viewed separately, but as a part of the regional processes and problems.

Kosovo and Metohija, as the biggest and most dangerous hotbed, should be addressed from the regional perspective, because only such an approach could claim stability. A reverse approach — addressing the region from the Kosovo perspective — would not tackle the integrity of the problem and thus would not be fruitful or, even worse, would prove counterproductive. The status of Kosovo and Metohija cannot be addressed without constantly taking into account the impact of any resolution on the preservation of an integral Bosnia and Herzegovina and on the peace in Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia.

Solutions to all regional problems should be sought in compromise and in self-sustainable stability, and therefore all parties to the conflict should renounce their maximum objectives. No party to the conflict should get everything and no party should lose everything.

It is necessary to eliminate the very possibility of a battle for territories and to encourage a battle for rights — the rights of people to work and earn, to develop their language and culture, to live in peace in their homes and on their land, on the hearths of their ancestors and next to the historic and cultural monuments they are undoubtedly heirs to.

I also called for a common approach among the countries in the region that would efficiently take care

of regional peace and stability. I believe that such an approach would be an interim step that would make all members ready and eligible to join the European Union.

Lastly, I said that it is necessary to make a plan immediately and define a precise sequence of steps to be taken in the coming months and years toward establishment of a permanent and sustainable peace in the region.

I have made all these proposals and comments because I feel that we must be very cautious in our efforts to improve the conditions in Kosovo and Metohija as expeditiously as possible. There are some international groups and organizations that have been offering their "good services" without this caution. They behave as if there had been no 5 October 2000, as if there had been no changes in Belgrade at all, as if Milosevic did not reside in The Hague. In this spirit, some have recently formulated a proposal to grant conditional independence to Kosovo and Metohija.

The whole world has rendered support to the democratic changes in Yugoslavia and Serbia, to the return of Yugoslavia to all international institutions and to the readiness of its new authorities to seek solutions to problems in the former Yugoslavia in peace, through dialogue and tolerance, with full respect for the interests of others and for protection of one's own interests. Granting any kind of independence to Kosovo, regardless of whether it is conditional or unconditional, would drastically ignore Serbian and Montenegran concerns and would punish the Serbs for all they have done recently to join the family of worthy nations.

The United Nations is responsible for and fully capable of initiating a dialogue without imposing final solutions. It has the power to make this dialogue successful and worthwhile, and its participants responsible.

I wish to point out that attached to my statement are "Principles of a programme for return of internally displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija", the "Report on the destruction of cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija" and a letter from the local Serbs from Kosovo Mitrovica addressed to the Security Council.

Mr. Strømmen (Norway): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his frank report, and the Special Representative for his interesting briefing on the situation in Kosovo. We have been looking forward to this first meeting with Mr. Steiner in the Council. The presence of Deputy Prime Minister Čović and his presentation here today are also greatly appreciated.

Norway would like to reiterate its full support for the Special Representative's mission priorities related to economic development, the fight against crime and violence, and the creation of a fair and safe society for all communities. Furthermore, we commend his efforts to develop the benchmarks, as circulated today. We welcome the progress made on the formation of the political and administrative structures of the provisional self-government institutions. This is essential to the successful implementation of resolution 1244 (1999), which presumes both a possibility and a willingness of all communities to participate in the Kosovo structures.

The agreement securing the Povratak Coalition's participation in the institutions is another example of the benefits to be gained through close cooperation between UNMIK and Belgrade. We commend the efforts of Mr. Steiner and Mr. Čović in this regard.

A democratic and efficient government structure in Kosovo also requires a multi-ethnic civil service. But the recruitment of minorities remains hampered by security concerns. It is unacceptable that the lack of security for minorities should continue to have negative implications for the normalization of everyday life, as well as for the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). Concerted efforts are needed to overcome these obstacles.

Norway condemns the recent violence in northern Mitrovica and the attacks on representatives of UNMIK police and KFOR. The situation in Mitrovica is complex. Extremists cannot be allowed to undermine cooperation among the people of Kosovo and the international community. UNMIK and the Kosovo institutions should strengthen cooperation with democratically elected moderate forces on the Kosovo Serb side. Belgrade can play a constructive part in this regard.

Respect for law and order in Kosovo must be enhanced. This is not only a minority issue, but a civic issue affecting all segments of the population. We urge Kosovo's elected leaders to publicly reject hate speech

and other incitement of ethnic intolerance and violence. Sustainable security, freedom of movement and a multi-ethnic society can in the final instance be created only by the people of Kosovo themselves.

Norway fully supports the measures taken by Mr. Steiner in order to more efficiently combat organized crime in Kosovo. Such crime, including trafficking in human beings, narcotics and weapons, continues to be a source of considerable concern, not only as regards Kosovo, but for the region and Europe at large.

The return of displaced persons and refugees remains an important challenge. Necessary conditions for sustainable return have yet to be created. This is also a question of political leadership and courage. Norway would like to emphasize the importance of the work carried out by the Housing and Property Directorate in Pristina. Its efforts to resolve property disputes will greatly facilitate returns, and it deserves financial and political support from the international community.

Norway welcomes Belgrade's adoption of a law on cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. We expect the necessary measures to implement the law to be taken as quickly as possible. Reconciliation and mutual tolerance depend on a willingness to face the past. The recent presentation in Belgrade of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe report, *As Seen, As Told*, represents a positive step in this respect. This report documents crimes and violations of human rights committed in Kosovo from October 1998 to October 1999.

Norway firmly believes that close cooperation between UNMIK, the provisional self-governing institutions and the authorities in Belgrade is of the utmost importance for the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). This relationship must be further strengthened, including through further progress on the issues covered by the Common Document. Norway welcomes Belgrade's recent transfer of Kosovo Albanian detainees. We now expect all those involved to intensify efforts to trace the large number of missing persons.

As regards the wider, regional context, Norway would like to reiterate that developments in Kosovo cannot be seen in isolation from developments in neighbouring countries. We therefore welcome further efforts to strengthen regional dialogue and cooperation between Kosovo, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and neighbouring countries, including with regard to the fight against organized crime.

Mr. Eldon (United Kingdom): I am very grateful for Michael Steiner for an excellent first briefing of the Council. It is also good to have here with us today Deputy Prime Minister Čović. It was particularly nice, I think, to see Bernard Kouchner here listening to Mr. Steiner's first briefing, and I hope that the French delegation will pass on to him our appreciation.

The representative of Spain will be speaking later in the debate on behalf of the European Union, and I fully associate myself with the statement that he will make.

Speaking nationally, I would like warmly to welcome the Secretary-General's report, and strongly endorse, on behalf of the British Government, his conclusions. There have been a number of very positive developments within the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and within Kosovo during the reporting period, and we recognize that very significant achievements have been made.

I would also like to congratulate Michael Steiner on a truly excellent start as Special Representative. We strongly support his priorities for UNMIK. Strengthening law and order, making economic progress and creating a safe society for all communities are self-evidently important and, indeed, vital, for Kosovo's development as a forward-looking, tolerant and prosperous society.

We also very strongly support the work that Mr. Steiner has in hand to define benchmarks against which progress in critical areas can be measured. This is highly consonant with the approach being followed in other United Nations operations, not least the post-independence presence in East Timor, and we welcome it — not least as a good example of better management practice.

But in Kosovo the development of a political and economic road map for both UNIK and the Provisional Self-Government is a very positive forward step. Using this road map, Kosovo's elected representatives can work towards the development of an effective Government for all its citizens. With our support and encouragement, as required, they can build lasting

security, democracy and prosperity in Kosovo, under the rule of law, developing cooperation with Belgrade and with others in the region.

We would also like to support the proposals of the Special Representative to strengthen minority representation in the Government at political and official levels, although we are disappointed by the continuing delay in the nomination of the minister from the Serbian community to serve in the Kosovo Self-Government, despite the brave stance which has been taken by leading members of the Kosovo Serb community in advocating engagement and cooperation. I want to underline that this delay harms the interests of Kosovo's minority communities.

I also welcome Mr. Čović's continued commitment to improving the situation in Kosovo. Although I noted the stark — perhaps, in places, deliberately stark — contrast between the two statements we heard today, I would like to say to Deputy Prime Minister Čović that teamwork between Belgrade, UNMIK and the Provisional Self-Government in Pristina is essential to make progress in areas of importance to all communities. We welcome the continuing dialogue in the High-ranking Working Group and, in particular, the increasing use of sub-groups to take work forward as quickly as possible. It is important that concrete progress be made rapidly on all aspects of the UNMIK-Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Common Document, particularly on security returns and the missing. You do not need me to tell you, Mr. President, that this is an important element of inter-ethnic confidence-building.

The United Kingdom fully backs efforts to support the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to Kosovo. In answer to Mr. Steiner's appeal for help and support, I would like to say that the United Kingdom is keen and willing to fund projects to help this process, and we are awaiting concrete proposals from UNMIK to take this forward. I would encourage as many partners as possible to join us in this effort.

Like Special Representative Steiner, we remain concerned about the levels of organized crime and extremism. This is a key factor in holding back economic and political development in Kosovo, and in also holding back returns on a substantial scale.

I also want to register concern at the continuing ethnically motivated attacks in Kosovo and the increase in violence against KFOR and the UNMIK. We will continue to support robust action by UNMIK and KFOR against those engaged in such activities.

Finally, I would like to underline our support for efforts to resolve the recent escalation of violence in Mitrovica. All those directly engaged, including UNMIK and Belgrade, should quickly find a solution that maintains UNMIK's responsibility for the administration of the whole of Kosovo while, at the same time, adequately protecting the interests of local Serbs.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic would like to extend its thanks to you, Mr. President, for holding this public meeting to discuss the recent developments in Kosovo. We would also like to welcome the presence among us of Mr. Nebojša Čović, Deputy Prime Minister of the Yugoslav constituent Republic of Serbia. We also welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We welcome as well Mr. Steiner, whose briefing on developments since he became the Secretary-General's Special Representative in Kosovo, in February 2002, we find very useful.

As I said, the delegation of Syria welcomes the Secretary-General's report, which contains references to many recent positive developments in Kosovo. The most important of those developments was the formation of a coalition Government in Kosovo, on 28 February 2002, under the leadership of Mr. Bajran Rexhepi, and Mr. Ibrahim Rugova as President of the country. With the formation of the Government, many interim functions have been transferred to specialized ministries. Since their establishment, those ministries have met many times under the authority of the Prime Minister to discuss long-term priorities, and a special budget has been earmarked for their work. The new Government has stressed the need to provide work opportunities and has confirmed the fact that there is a need to integrate all ethnic communities into the country's development structures.

My delegation welcomes the efforts made by the authorities in Kosovo to create a multi-ethnic civil service with an acceptable percentage of ethnic minorities, ranging from 10 to 25 per cent and made up primarily of persons from the ranks of the poor. This also applies at the local level, where we find that the level of ethnic minorities is less than 10 per cent. My

delegation encourages the structure that has been established to facilitate the participation of ethnic minorities in civilian posts. That could be achieved by providing minorities with means of communication, security and protection. This has encouraged ethnic minorities to submit applications for civilian posts in the new ministries.

Syria also welcomes the efforts made to facilitate the return of all the various ethnic groups and displaced persons. A source of optimism for us is the initiative by the new Government of Kosovo to lay the foundations for economic progress, and UNMIK's efforts to establish a propitious climate, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), to attract investment and strengthen foreign trade, which will result in improving the standard of living in Kosovo, the lowest in all of Europe. However, in that context, we must also combat the economic crime confronting the development process in Kosovo, represented by the black market run by organized criminal groups.

Despite the fact that the security situation in Kosovo has recently improved, there continue to be occasional acts of violence and crime against KFOR and the UNMIK police force. It is necessary to combat such illegal acts of violence by organized crime, which serve to cause unrest and instability in Kosovo. The granting of amnesty for the collecting of arms is a very important step that will enable KFOR and UNMIK police to collect weapons and prevent the illegal acquisition of arms by organized crime groups that are trying to undermine the entire climate of security and stability achieved to date in Kosovo.

We would like to emphasize here that it is necessary to provide all the necessary conditions to guarantee the return of refugees and displaced persons, as well as to integrate the various ethnic groups into all walks of life in Kosovo.

We would also like to stress once again that it is necessary to continue cooperation between the United Nations Mission, Belgrade and Skopje to reach agreement with both countries on the demarcation of the border in accordance with the Agreement signed by both sides.

My delegation supports the various observations contained in the Secretary-General's report. We also support Mr. Steiner's efforts to make progress in the important areas of the rule of law, democratic institutions, the economy, freedom of movement and the return of internally displaced persons and refugees, as well as his participation in achieving regional stability in the Balkan region.

Finally, my delegation would like to welcome the Council's adoption later today of the draft presidential statement on Kosovo that has been submitted to us.

Mr. Aguilar Zinser (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I too would like to join the delegations that have spoken before me in thanking Mr. Michael Steiner, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, for the information he has provided us and for his presence among us at this meeting of the Council. We also thank him for his introduction of the report of the Secretary-General. We encourage Mr. Steiner to continue to work with the same diligence, dedication and ability he has demonstrated in the discharge of the duties assigned to him by the Secretary-General. We also wish to welcome the presence among us of Mr. Nebojša Čović, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, and to thank him for his statement.

With the support of KFOR and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the province has embarked upon what is, frankly, a phase of institutional consolidation and intensive work to give fluidity and stability to the political processes of its autonomous Government. However, the information we receive from Kosovo alternates between optimism and pessimism. On the one hand, we see progress in the consolidation of the interim autonomous Government; on the other hand, we hear that inter-ethnic relations continue to be difficult and that progress in integrating the various ethnic groups into Government structures is slow, and even conflict-ridden and tortuous.

It seems at times that two Kosovos exist. One is moving towards civility, democracy, tolerance and respect for human rights, as well as the re-establishment of normal life under the rule of law. However, the other Kosovo is characterized by ongoing inter-ethnic discord, rejection and the worsening of differences. All those elements encourage violence and political intolerance.

The Secretary-General's report and the monthly report of the United Nations on KFOR operations strongly claim our attention by the clarity with which they describe some cases of violence between ethnic groups and against UNMIK personnel. In this context,

Mexico calls on the authorities of Kosovo to ensure the security of international staff and personnel stationed in the area. Although guilty individuals can be found for each act of violence, we cannot forget that the most important priority is to achieve reconciliation among all the province's inhabitants and the integration of Kosovo. The construction of a multi-ethnic and democratic society in which minorities feel fairly represented undoubtedly constitutes an essential part of UNMIK's mandate and of Mr. Steiner's work.

Exclusion will make democracy impossible. Exclusion only fuels the conflicts that will arise tomorrow. That is why reconciliation among all Kosovars can be achieved only through a series of firm, consecutive actions, some of which require the continuation of others. One of those steps is the essential task of ensuring the return of more than 200,000 refugees and displaced persons. In this context, we encourage UNMIK to make progress towards that objective, which is one of the responsibilities entrusted to it by Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Along with political violence, Kosovo is experiencing the ravages of organized crime. Organized crime corrupts institutions, damages the morale of peoples and breeds distrust. The establishment of the rule of law in Kosovo is also a priority. In this context, Mexico takes note of the progress made on the issue and of the decisions taken by the North Atlantic Council, in consultation with the countries of the region, on measures to strengthen border security and to combat smuggling in the Balkans. The rule of law not only strengthens the institutions and individuals, but also fosters economic growth, development and social integration. Kosovo needs not only assistance, but also investment. It is therefore essential that the rule of law provide a climate of security for investment. Mexico takes note of the announcement that an agency in charge of privatization will be created.

The international community and several international organizations have provided Kosovo with the resources, the firm political will and the hope to lay the foundations of peace, understanding and stability throughout the region. We all wish to see a prosperous, democratic Kosovo that fully respects human rights and is free of prejudice and violence. Mexico takes note of the creation of indices to measure progress made in fulfilling UNMIK's mandate.

The United Nations and the international community, with full respect for the decisions of the inhabitants of the province and in consultation with the regional actors, must ensure that coordination efforts among all parties involved culminate in a lasting peace in the region.

Mr. Wang Yingfan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation thanks Deputy Prime Minister Čović for his presence at the Council's meeting and for his statement. We also warmly thank Special Representative Mr. Steiner for his briefing.

The Chinese delegation welcomes the recent progress made by the Provisional Government of Kosovo in including representatives of various ethnic groups. We welcome the positive attitude demonstrated by minorities, including Serbs, in participating in the political life of Kosovo. We hope that this will assist the provisional Government's efforts to establish effective and fair administration throughout Kosovo and, gradually, a multi-ethnic society under the rule of law, with the assistance of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We believe that ensuring basic rights and interests, freedom of movement and normal life for ethnic groups, especially minorities, is essential to the creation of a society ruled by law. We hope that UNMIK and the provisional Government will make further efforts to ensure local security and to improve the living conditions of minorities.

The Chinese delegation is concerned by recent developments in the situation in Mitrovica in northern Kosovo. We hope that UNMIK will deal appropriately with the situation, in full consultation with the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The attacks on United Nations personnel are a matter of concern. We support UNMIK in fully implementing resolution 1244 (1999). All parties and factions in Kosovo are obliged to accord adequate respect and cooperation to UNMIK.

At the same time, we are deeply mindful of the legitimate concerns of people of various ethnic groups in Mitrovica. We hope that the rights and interests of all ethnic groups in that city will be duly respected and addressed fairly. We hope that UNMIK will make positive efforts truly to accommodate the concerns of minorities, to promote ethnic reconciliation in Mitrovica and to create favourable conditions for the return of refugees in order to lay a solid foundation for

a multi-ethnic society and for long-term stability in the city and throughout Kosovo.

The Chinese delegation appreciates the positive efforts of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to solve the problem of Albanian prisoners of war. We hope that the Common Document signed by UNMIK and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will be effectively implemented.

We also hope that UNMIK and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will continue to strengthen their high-level cooperation so as to facilitate the settlement of a number of problems such as that of missing persons, the return of refugees and border stability.

Mr. Yap Ong Heng (Singapore): We would first like to welcome Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Nebojša Čović and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Michael Steiner, to the Security Council. We thank them for their comprehensive and informative statement and briefing, respectively. Together with the excellent report of the Secretary-General on Kosovo, they have set out a useful framework for a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999) to date. This was a suggestion that you made, Mr. President — and which we supported — at last month's public meeting on Kosovo.

Singapore supports the three priorities that Mr. Steiner has set out for Kosovo: laying the foundations for economic progress, tackling crime and violence, and creating a fair and safe society for all communities. At this stage, these priorities are at the heart of ensuring the further implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). They aptly build on those priorities outlined by the previous Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Kosovo. We are honoured by Mr. Bernard Kouchner's presence earlier at this important meeting.

In assessing the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999), we must look at the trend lines since the resolution was adopted. We are glad to note the substantial progress that has been made in the political sphere, despite difficult periods of tension and deadlock. Two political landmarks have been achieved since Mr. Steiner took up his post: the formation of a coalition Government and, most recently, the agreement to include a Serb representative in the provisional institutions of self-government in Kosovo. We commend Mr. Steiner for his efforts in this and other areas of priority.

We note, however, that despite the best efforts of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and of KFOR, the rate of return of displaced persons from the Kosovo Serb and other minority communities remains low, and ethnically motivated attacks continue. Of particular concern is the increase in violence against officers of the UNMIK police and the Kosovo Police Service.

We support UNMIK and KFOR stepping up their efforts to create the necessary conditions for sustainable returns in an inclusive society in which all communities can live freely and in peace, and we urge the provisional institutions of self-government to give their full support. We also call on all Kosovars fully to respect the rule of law.

Dialogue and cooperation between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, UNMIK and, recently, the provisional institutions of self-government — imperative for the full implementation of resolution 1244 (1999) — have yielded positive results, significantly, the transfer of Kosovo Albanian prisoners by the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia into UNMIK's custody.

We look forward to progress on returns, the issue of missing persons and other issues listed in the Common Document signed by UNMIK and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

We welcome the opportunity to participate in today's comprehensive assessment of the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). While not akin to a regular review mechanism for UNMIK, similar to those for all other United Nations peacekeeping operations, such assessments by the Council on a regular basis allow it to review the implementation of the mandates we gave to UNMIK and KFOR.

As we have said previously, reviews are a way for the Security Council to maintain regular oversight and to impose discipline on a system, through assessing the progress made in line with set benchmarks. We are therefore pleased to note that the Secretary-General has, in his latest report, asked his Special Representative to develop benchmarks against which progress can be measured in several critical areas. These benchmarks, as the Secretary-General pointed

out, are for the purpose of providing the necessary political road map for UNMIK and the provisional institutions of self-government.

We agree with the Secretary-General that we should avoid undercutting the achievements made so far and that

> "premature disengagement could lead to a vacuum of power and instability that could be filled by organized crime and extremism." *(S/2002/436, para. 54)*

With a well-defined political road map, all of the actors in Kosovo would have one common, comprehensive strategy to guide their presence and support for the territory. A clear benchmark set would allow them to monitor the progress made and to fine-tune their involvement with and assistance to Kosovo accordingly. The aim at the end of the day must be to establish a viable Kosovo that contributes to regional stability.

We believe that one important aspect of a political road map for Kosovo is a resolution of the final status of the territory. Allow me to reiterate that in paragraph 11 (e) of resolution 1244 (1999), the Council decided that UNMIK should facilitate a political process designed to determine Kosovo's future status, taking into account the Rambouillet accords. Those accords call for the convening of an international meeting three years after the entry into force of the accords to determine a mechanism for a final settlement for Kosovo on the basis of the will of the people. The Rambouillet accords were signed on 18 March 1999, hence the deadline has already passed. For this reason, as well as others, there is now a greater urgency to establish a mechanism for determining Kosovo's final status. The International Crisis Group report of 1 March 2002 on "A Kosovo Road Map (I): Addressing Final Status" states:

> "The refusal to address Kosovo's final status perpetuates an inherently unstable situation. As long as Albanian fears and Serb hopes of Kosovo's eventual reincorporation into Yugoslavia are allowed to persist, efforts to develop normal relations between the two communities, either within Kosovo or between Kosovo and Serbia, are unlikely to bear fruit. While the issue remains open, each side will continue to regard the other as a threat. This puts at risk both Kosovo's fragile peace and the significant international investment in the province. It also ensures that any international hopes of withdrawing from Kosovo will be frustrated."

In its accompanying report on "A Kosovo Road Map (II): Internal Benchmarks", the International Crisis Group also states:

> "Such benchmarks are ... indispensable for assessing Kosovo's internal progress. However, while the achievement of these standards must influence the timing of the implementation of an agreed final status, it should neither delay decisions on status nor determine what form it should take. The fact that much remains to be done internally is no reason to delay a formal consideration of the relative merits of different options for final status."

We agree with the Group's recommendation that a process to move towards the resolution of the final status should be initiated without further delay. We note Mr. Steiner's view that the time has not yet come for such a process to start, but it should not be put off for too long. At the very least, the process should be defined. If put together well, in consultation with all of the major players on Kosovo, a settlement mechanism could in fact serve as a key confidence-building measures among the parties to the Kosovo problem — Serbia, the Kosovo Albanians and the ethnic Serb minority in the territory.

While not prejudging the final status, the mechanism would present to the parties an explicit guide on how the final-status issue could be resolved eventually, and with such a clear process the political will of the parties could begin to build upon the positive trends to address the long-term future of Kosovo in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999).

Although the Security Council cannot and should not determine the final status of Kosovo at this point, the Council must also not delay establishing a settlement mechanism or process that would remove the uncertainties that perpetuate tension and instability in the territory. We look forward to discussing the political road map for Kosovo.

Mr. Cunningham (United States of America): I should like to join others in welcoming Special Representative Steiner to the Council and also Deputy Prime Minister Čović. It is good to have them here for

this discussion and to take note of the significant accomplishments that Mr. Steiner has achieved in his first 10 weeks in Kosovo. The formation of the provisional Kosovo Government and the agreement reached on Serb participation is welcome news and provides a solid foundation for us to move forward.

In his excellent briefing, Mr. Steiner outlined some impressive achievements that have been made in the past months and set out some ideas about prospects for the future that we find encouraging and strongly support, although there is obviously much still to be done. In particular, we applaud the concept of benchmarks, and we support Special Representative Steiner's efforts to promote objective standards of good governance. In our view, those benchmarks are not tied to a specific political outcome, but they should be seen by all as the way to measure progress in building democratic security and economic institutions and processes that are fully representative and responsive to the needs of all Kosovars. I agree with his assessment that achievement of those benchmarks should be an objective in and of itself, necessary for the Kosovans and, indeed, necessary for stability and success in the region, no matter what the outcome, eventually and much later, of a final status discussion.

We are encouraged at the positive response to this initiative from the new Government. Prime Minister Rexhapi's forthcoming statements of support for promoting Serb returns are promising signs of a commitment among Kosovo's leaders to the sort of multi-ethnic and democratic Kosovo that is envisaged in resolution 1244 (1999) and that my Government strongly supports.

I also want to note Deputy Prime Minister Čović's contribution and his important and constructive role in representing his Government's views on Kosovo. We ask that the minister convey back to his authorities our assurance that we will continue to support enhanced cooperation between the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and Belgrade.

In that regard, we are encouraged by the working relationship that has developed between Special Representative Steiner and Deputy Prime Minister Čović in 10 short weeks. They have already met several times to exchange views, and we hope that they will continue that act of dialogue, which in our view is the best recipe for avoiding misunderstandings and helping all concerned to deal with the difficult issues ahead.

The progress on the return of the detainees was good news, and we expect that more will be done on return of the displaced and on other priorities in the Common Document in the months ahead. I noted Mr. Steiner's intention to build on that progress and to focus on returns.

Our desire to address Serb priorities in Kosovo should not, however, suggest that we assume that there is agreement among Serbs on how their priorities are best addressed. There is a considerable range of views within the Povratak Coalition on how best to respond to Serb concerns. Some think they can achieve that by actively participating in Kosovo's provisional institutions of self-government, and others think that it will happen only with parallel Serb institutions. Some think that the only way to promote security is to adhere strictly to the rule of law, and others think that they should seek justice in the streets. Those are two very different visions, and it is obvious which one we support and encourage.

I raise that point in connection with the disturbance in Mitrovica on 8 April, which left more than 20 UNMIK police injured and at least one in a life-threatening condition. We oppose any effort to simplify events and to present what happened in Mitrovica as representing a Kosovar-Serb point of view. We think that it does not. The activity of the bridge gang more likely resembles similar actions in the past by Kosovar Albanian extremists, who have also condoned or promoted violence and illegality. But the situation highlights the need for the rule of law, and while we understand the importance of the political issues at play in Mitrovica, we have no tolerance for any attack on United Nations personnel. Respect for the rule of law throughout, by all parties, is fundamental for the future, and we were pleased to see a similar point of view expressed in Kosovo by both Serb and Albanian political leaders.

My Government believes that resolution 1244 (1999) and the constitutional framework offer the best guarantee for all Kosovars. Within those parameters, we will continue to support efforts on the range of issues — security, economic reform, minority rights, the rule of law and freedom of movement — that must be addressed. Interlocking progress on all those issues is the best way forward for all communities in Kosovo,

and Special Representative Steiner will have our strong support in pursuing that.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): Bernard Kouchner, Minister of Health, who was the first Special Representative to Kosovo, took advantage of his presence in New York for the Global AIDS Fund to sit at France's seat and listen to the statements of the Special Representative and of the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Čović. By that gesture, he wished to indicate France's friendly and determined support for his outstanding successor, Mr. Michael Steiner. Indeed, that gesture is symbolic of French-German cooperation to help Kosovo rejoin Europe, its values and its ideals of peace, democracy and progress.

France associates itself with the statement that the Permanent Representative of Spain will make later on behalf of the European Union. In my statement, I shall emphasize the issues to which we attach more specific importance at the national level.

During the Council's debate on 27 March, several speakers expressed their intention to contribute to an evaluation of the action of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Mr. Steiner also committed himself to that undertaking and made enlightening comments.

After spending less than two and a half months in Pristina, the Special Representative already has important accomplishments to his credit. His role was decisive in overcoming a persistent political deadlock and in allowing the election of a President of Kosovo as well as the formation of a coalition Government. Subject to the nomination of the final members of the autonomous Government team, the institutions of provisional self-government are already in place. Therefore, the necessary conditions for the effective implementation of the provisions of the constitutional framework for self-government are nearly in place. We welcome the first decisions taken by the autonomous Government, and we encourage the elected Kosovars to exercise fully, with respect for law, the powers delegated to them by the constitutional framework.

We are grateful to the Special Representative for having charted the course by giving UNMIK and the autonomous institutions clear priorities to ensure a full application of the constitutional framework in conformity with the provisions of resolution 1244 (1999). It is necessary to focus on the implementation of those essential tasks. As the Secretary-General emphasized in his last report on UNMIK's activities, it would be useful to acquire the means to evaluate precisely the amount of progress achieved. Using those criteria, it would be possible to measure the respect of the provisional institutions for the great principles of democracy, the rule of law and regional stability set out by resolution 1244 (1999) and the constitutional framework with a view to encouraging the newly elected Kosovar representatives to pursue that path.

Moreover, it is gratifying that the Special Representative and the Yugoslav authorities have been able to develop an extensive dialogue on issues of joint interest. We welcome the presence at the side of the Special Representative of an adviser of the head of the Provisional Government at the most recent meeting of the High-level Working Group. This will help towards the establishment of relations of confident cooperation, which we wish to see, between UNMIK and the provisional institutions, on the one hand, and the Belgrade authorities, on the other. The implementation of the Common Document signed on 5 November by Mr. Čović and Mr. Haekerrup must continue. That Document is a cornerstone of the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999), with which it is in full conformity.

On the basis of that text, the Yugoslav Government was able to decide to transfer to Kosovo the Albanian prisoners detained in Serbia and to place them under UNMIK control. That fruitful cooperation should be expanded and the provisions of the Common Document fully implemented. Further substantial progress is essential, in particular with regard to the return of members of minority communities, the recovery of their freedom of movement and the issue of missing persons.

In Kosovo, the rule of law, economic development and the creation of an equal society for all are imperatives that are inextricably linked. Progress must be made simultaneously in those three areas, as the Secretary-General and his Special Representative have called for. This is necessary if a multi-ethnic future is to be built.

In Mitrovica, a comprehensive approach has also been adopted, in accordance with the strategy laid out last year by Mr. Haekerrup for the North Atlantic Council. That approach, which enjoys our full support, is the basis for the activities of UNMIK and KFOR in that municipality. It has borne its first fruits, judging by

the reduction in the number of incidents in recent months. In that context, the recent attacks on UNMIK police personnel must be condemned. All those who wield influence over the principal actors in that city must use it to put an end to intimidation and violence and to achieve the dismantling of parallel structures. Generally speaking, we encourage all communities to respect UNMIK's authority throughout Kosovo. It is in their interest and in that of the peaceful conduct of the process towards provisional autonomy.

Mr. Rivas (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to welcome the report submitted to us by the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), as well as the introduction provided to us by his Special Representative, Mr. Steiner, who, since assuming his duties on 14 February, has worked intensively to promote the Mission's priorities in economic development, eradicating crime and violence and establishing a just and safe society for all the communities of Kosovo. We welcome Mr. Steiner on his first briefing before the Council.

I also wish once again to welcome to the Council the Deputy Prime Minister of the Yugoslav constituent Republic of Serbia, Mr. Čović, and to thank him for his essential contribution to the process and for the information he has provided us.

The Secretary-General's report highlights the efforts and resources that the international community has invested in creating an effective political system, a viable economy and a multi-ethnic, peaceful and law-abiding society in Kosovo. Some substantial progress has been made in establishing provisional institutions of self-government, such as the coalition Government and the Assembly. Many difficulties have been encountered in the efforts to build a multi-ethnic Civil Service, to improve the security situation and to create the conditions necessary for the Kosovar Serbs to remain and for refugees and displaced persons to return. The establishment of bases for economic progress is moving ahead with the introduction of the euro, the campaign against economic crime and the strengthening of the banking system and tax collection.

Advances have also been made in regional cooperation, such as in the transfer of prisoners between Serbia and Kosovo, the adoption of three protocols related to the issue of missing persons, assistance to families and the coordination of border security between Serbia and Macedonia. All such regional cooperation and coordination is essential to the success of the Mission and must be pursued on the basis of the recognition of UNMIK's authority by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

This complex process should lead to the definitive consolidation of the provisional institutions of self-government and to the conclusion of the Mission. To that end, political, technical and financial support is more necessary than ever for the Mission, which is entering a potentially more dangerous phase, as the Secretary-General indicates in his report. This phase in the implementation of anti-crime initiatives may provoke retaliation against UNMIK and KFOR. The attacks of 8 April against UNMIK police in Mitrovica, which deserve our sternest condemnation, are merely one manifestation of the potential difficulties of this new phase. Colombia appeals to all the communities of Kosovo and to the provisional institutions of self-government to work together to ensure respect for the authority of UNMIK and KFOR and to eradicate organized crime, terrorism and violence.

I wish to conclude by supporting the Secretary-General's initiative to request his Special Representative, Mr. Steiner, to establish a system of mediation or benchmarks allowing progress to be measured in such critical areas as the rule of law, democratic institutions, the economy, freedom of movement, the return of refugees and displaced persons and contributions to regional stability.

Mr. Corr (Ireland): On behalf of my delegation, I should first like to join others in welcoming Special Representative Steiner to the Council today. We have been looking forward to this first meeting with Mr. Steiner. We also, of course, welcome Deputy Prime Minister Čović. We are very grateful to Mr. Steiner for his very comprehensive briefing this morning, as well as to the Secretary-General for his most recent report on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I would also like to thank Deputy Prime Minister Čović for his important statement this morning and to say how glad my delegation was to see Mr. Kouchner with us at the beginning of our meeting.

Ireland fully agrees with the statement that will be delivered by the representative of Spain on behalf of

the European Union, so I shall make only a few comments of particular importance to my delegation.

Ireland warmly congratulates Special Representative Steiner on the strong and positive start he has made in only a number of weeks, laying out an ambitious programme of priorities and building on the very considerable achievements of his predecessors. He has outlined a map, as he put it this morning, on how to finish the job and we welcome this.

We also welcome the further progress in ensuring participation by all communities in the provisional institutions of self-government, following the elections by the Kosovo Assembly of Mr. Rugova as President and Mr. Rexhepi as Prime Minister of Kosovo, as well as the formation of a Government. We welcome the agreement on the participation of the Kosovo Serb Return Coalition — Povratak — in the institutions, giving voice to the electorate that they represent in the new Government. It is essential that Kosovo have a truly multi-ethnic Government, representative of all of its people, and we are encouraged by signs that a similar approach is gradually being adopted in the composition of the Civil Service, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report. We urge the fullest possible participation by the minority communities in the public service.

Mr. Steiner has outlined a comprehensive vision for Kosovo's future development, based on economic progress, the rule of law and a fair and just society for all the people of Kosovo. Ireland especially welcomes the emphasis on economic reform and reconstruction, including, as we heard this morning, privatization, which are essential to ensuring real stability in Kosovo and without which progress in combating crime and violence will inevitably be limited. Kosovo's people, in particular its young people, must be given a sense of hope and real possibilities for the future. Jobs will clearly be a key element of this. We heard this morning about progress in both of these areas, as well as in the social services — schools, hospitals and so forth — and in the area of crime reduction. That is very welcome.

Ireland also welcomes the Secretary-General's request to Special Representative Steiner that he elaborate a series of benchmarks in order to measure progress in the institutional development of Kosovo, as well as with regard to the rule of law, the economy and other areas. This is a very positive and constructive development. We have looked carefully at the summary that has been provided this morning and we very much welcome this initiative.

We call on all of Kosovo's elected leaders to work together, including with UNMIK and KFOR, to achieve the objectives which have been outlined by the Special Representative. Cooperation between all communities aimed at achieving these objectives is vital in enhancing Kosovo's European perspectives.

Once again, Ireland also encourages all elected leaders to develop a genuine political dialogue, both within and between Kosovo's communities. We look forward to real engagement on this issue in the approach to the municipal elections in September.

The development of real dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade is clearly a further essential element in the achievement of the objectives outlined by the Special Representative. The Common Document signed by Belgrade and UNMIK last November provides the framework for such discussions, and we welcome the participation, for the first time, of a representative of the provisional institution of self-government at a meeting of the High-Ranking Working Group on 9 April.

Ireland regards the recent transfer to UNMIK by the authorities in Belgrade of Kosovo Albanian prisoners as a key element in developing the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. This removes an unnecessary irritant, but it is also a major step in the process of reconciliation between the Albanian and Serbian communities in Kosovo. We look forward, in the context of an enhanced dialogue, to further progress with regard to the return of displaced persons within Kosovo, as well as to determining the fate of missing persons from all communities. As we have said before, the slow rate of Kosovo Serb returns — despite some progress — remains worrying. A framework of economic and other measures must be put in place in order to increase the numbers resettling and remaining in Kosovo. In this respect, as Mr. Steiner said in his statement, we need a real breakthrough, but this will require a substantial commitment, including a financial commitment.

The creation of a society based on the rule of law is fundamental to the future development of Kosovo and, in particular, to the opening of European perspectives for the province. Democracy cannot take hold in an environment where crime and violence

flourish, and we are deeply disturbed by indications in the Secretary-General's report of continuing ethnically motivated violence.

Ireland strongly condemns, as others have this morning, the absolutely unjustifiable attacks against UNMIK police on 8 April in Mitrovica, which resulted in a substantial number of casualties. Those promoting such attacks and ongoing unrest in the area must recognize the authority of UNMIK throughout Kosovo. We welcome the statements of those local community leaders who condemned these attacks. All of Kosovo's leaders must make clear that there is no future in support for extremism. Economic success can follow only in a society based on the rule of law.

The successful development of Kosovo will help to ensure peace and stability in South-East Europe. Kosovo's vocation lies in Europe. Its progress along the path towards European integration can be determined only by Kosovo itself and by the work of its leaders in building a truly democratic and multi-ethnic society. Ireland, together with its partners in the European Union, will continue to support greater integration and regional cooperation through the Stability Pact and the stabilization and association process. The South-East European Cooperation Process summit in Tirana on 28 March marked a further important step in enhancing regional cooperation that will open further European perspectives for Kosovo.

Mr. Diallo (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like first of all to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting.

We would also like to thank Mr. Michael Steiner, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, for the valuable information that he has given us. We reaffirm our support for him.

We welcome Mr. Nebojša Čović, Deputy Prime Minister of the Yugoslav constituent Republic of Serbia, and thank him for his statement.

The Council's periodic consideration of the question of Kosovo allows it to assess the development of the situation on the ground and to take the necessary measures, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999). At the most recent meeting of the Council on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), we were able to welcome the end of the deadlock in the political situation in Kosovo. We were encouraged by the information that Mr. Steiner provided earlier with regard to the fact that the Povratak Coalition has been accepted as a participant in the Government. That is a clear sign that an atmosphere of trust and a climate of peace and security have been re-established.

My delegation welcomes the recent developments on the ground. At the political level, the transformation of the transitional departments into autonomous provisional ministries is to be welcomed. We encourage the authorities to pursue the implementation of the short- and medium-term programmes that they have set up.

My delegation welcomes the efforts made by the various parties to establish a collegial Presidency of the Assembly. We support the establishment, within the Office of the Prime Minister, of a structure to deal with issues of good governance, human rights, equal opportunity and gender. Adequate assistance should be given to that service to allow it to shoulder its responsibilities.

We support the efforts under way to prepare for municipal elections, which we hope will take place in September 2002.

With regard to regional cooperation, my delegation is encouraged by the ongoing cooperation between the Belgrade authorities and UNMIK in the implementation of the provisions of the Common Document.

The participation of a member of the provisional institutions of self-government at the most recent meeting of the High-Ranking Working Group is clearly an encouraging development.

The meeting that took place on 18 March in Skopje between Mr. Steiner and Mr. Trajkovski, the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and the conclusions that they reached on the various subjects discussed, as mentioned in paragraph 46 of the report, are also promising.

My delegation renews its support for the three priority areas set out in the report. Within the framework of establishing economic bases, the efforts under way should be encouraged. In our view, the success of any programme depends on taking into account the interests of all elements and all categories in the province, as well as the objective of the stabilization of the region.

With regard to the issue of security, it is worth noting that the overall situation has improved. Nevertheless, we condemn attacks against UNMIK and encourage the continuation of cooperation between it and KFOR.

We welcome the progressive transfer of UNMIK police functions to the multi-ethnic Kosovo Police Service.

Moreover, we appreciate the steps taken by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General with various parties to achieve a negotiated solution to the various pending questions. In that regard, my delegation encourages actions under way for the return of refugees, the reintegration of displaced persons, the transfer of prisoners, the search for solutions to the plight of missing persons, the strengthening of multi-ethnicity and the effective integration of minority ethnic groups in the active life of Kosovo.

Finally, my delegation fully supports the relevant observations made by the Secretary-General in his report.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank you personally, Mr. President, for having organized this open debate on Kosovo. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his detailed and in-depth report on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and to thank Deputy Prime Minister Nebojša Čović for returning to the Council table. I would also like to welcome Mr. Michael Steiner to the Council. I must say that I was very impressed by the clarity of his presentation, which reflects a determined and clear approach to Kosovo's problems and which augurs well for a robust continuation of the excellent start of his mission in Kosovo. My country is convinced that the efforts made by both Mr. Čović and Mr. Steiner to normalize the situation in Kosovo will contribute to achieving the objectives of the international community set out in Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

As a country associated with the European Union, Bulgaria associates itself with the statement to be made later by the Permanent Representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union. I would nevertheless like to make a few comments in my national capacity.

My country supports the approach of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General aimed at defining major priorities in the work of UNMIK that emphasize the establishment of a viable economy that can improve the living conditions of members of all ethnic communities and combat organized crime and violence.

Bulgaria welcomes the establishment of a central executive body of the provisional institutions of self-government of the province. We hope that the entry into the Government by representatives of all communities will be achieved soon. The establishment of provisional institutions of self-government and the setting up of an effective administration whose membership reflects Kosovo's multi-ethnic character will contribute to normalizing the lives of the population. My country supports UNMIK's efforts to ensure equal opportunities for the participation of all communities in the formation of central and local administration in Kosovo.

Bulgaria supports UNMIK's efforts to improve security in the province and to combat organized crime and violence in all their forms. My country fully supports the delegation of the United Kingdom and others that have forcefully spoken of the need to better control organized crime in Kosovo. At the same time, Bulgaria condemns continued manifestations of ethnically motivated violence, including violent attacks against representatives of UNMIK, KFOR and the Kosovo Police Service. Such attacks must be categorically condemned by the provisional institutions of self-government and by all political officials in Kosovo. Bulgaria is following those events closely and finds unacceptable any attempts by groups or individuals, regardless of ethnic affiliation, to undermine stability and the international community's efforts through the Special Representative to bring life in Kosovo back to normal.

My country will continue to insist on a definitive establishment of the facts regarding the brutal murder in Kosovo of the Bulgarian citizen Valentin Krumov and on the need for the perpetrators of that act to be handed over to UNMIK.

Bulgaria welcome's UNMIK's cooperation with Macedonian authorities aimed at creating a common commission of experts entrusted with settling practical problems regarding a common border on the basis of agreements reached. The attempts by certain political groups and individuals in Kosovo to use this technical element for political ends are totally unacceptable and

do not contribute to strengthening regional stability and security.

My country believes that continued cooperation between UNMIK and the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is of particular importance. That cooperation improves security and strengthens confidence on the regional level. The agreement reached on various issues — in particular on prisoner transfer and the return of refugees — is both a concrete measure to strengthen confidence between communities and a sign of improvement in the overall atmosphere in Kosovo.

Bulgaria supports the international community in its efforts to respond properly to the need to ensure the implementation of projects of vital importance to Kosovo. My country favours having the European Commission and the World Bank draft a strategy to reduce Kosovo's dependence on external assistance. We also welcome the idea of establishing criteria to allow the province gradually to shoulder responsibility for its own finances.

Bulgaria will continue to participate in collective peacekeeping and stability mechanisms in Kosovo. My country is doing its part by contributing 143 police officers to the international police forces, as well as soldiers to KFOR.

In recent months, we have begun to see a certain ethnic tolerance coming to light in Kosovo. My delegation is fairly optimistic about the future of inter-community relations. My country will continue to support the emergence of a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo that respects universally recognized principles and norms of human rights and the rule of law.

We share the view that the process of the return of refugees and displaced persons is one of the most important signs of the normalization of life in Kosovo. That process is directly tied to an improvement in security conditions, the rebuilding of the economy and the creation of new jobs.

The presence of UNMIK and KFOR in Kosovo is a key factor for security. We encourage UNMIK and KFOR to continue their efforts to guarantee security and a normal life for all the inhabitants of the province, along with the provisional institutions of self-government.

Mr. Gokool (Mauritius): We join other delegations in extending a warm welcome at today's meeting to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Steiner. We are pleased to have him among us today to hear his assessment of the post-election situation in Kosovo and the challenges facing the province now that the provisional self-government is in place. We take this opportunity to congratulate him for the manner in which he has been able to step right into the shoes of his predecessor. We have no doubt that under his guidance the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) will continue to carry out its task efficiently and effectively to build a Kosovo as envisaged in resolution 1244 (1999), which remains the basis for building Kosovo's future. Mauritius fully supports the efforts of Mr. Steiner and his team.

We also extend a very warm welcome to the Deputy Prime Minister of the Yugoslav constituent Republic of Serbia, Mr. Čović. We thank him for his statement. His presence in the Council meetings reassures the international community of the willingness of the Yugoslav authorities to continue their collaboration with the United Nations in building a multi-ethnic, peaceful, democratic and prosperous Kosovo.

We are happy to note the agreement reached on the participation of the Kosovo Serb Return Coalition in the new Government. We call on all elected bodies to abide by their commitments to work together in the provisional institutions of self-government.

The security situation of minority communities in the province remains a high priority of the international community. Ethnically motivated attacks and the intimidation of minority communities, which continue to occur, are matters of great concern to my delegation. Such acts may disrupt the peace process. We commend the efforts of UNMIK and KFOR in the protection of these people and in helping the integration process.

We note with satisfaction the various initiatives undertaken to facilitate the integration process. The concerns of the minority communities must be properly addressed by the representatives in the provisional self-government. The full engagement of the ethnic minorities in the administrative service is an important way forward to confidence-building measures. It is the view of my delegation, as it is of others, that creating parallel structures and opposing the authority of

UNMIK will be most unproductive and not to the benefit of the Serb community in Mitrovica. We view the situation in that area with great concern. We deplore the recent attacks on UNMIK and KFOR personnel in that region. We believe that there is an urgent need for UNMIK, with the collaboration of KFOR and the Kosovo Police Service, to establish its full authority over the Mitrovica region as soon as possible to prevent extremist activities that can undermine stability in the region.

We call once again on all those who can help to improve the deteriorating situation in the Mitrovica region to help UNMIK curb violence and to establish the rule of law in that area. We call on the minority communities in Kosovo, in particular the Serbs in the Mitrovica region, to integrate themselves into the structures established by UNMIK and to eliminate parallel structures. Perhaps the Belgrade authorities can use their influence over the Serb community in the Mitrovica region to persuade them to cooperate fully with UNMIK and the new Government in building a Kosovo in which all communities enjoy a free and peaceful life.

The fate of the detainees and missing persons has also been a very sensitive issue that has remained high on the agenda of both parties. Last month, we applauded the transfer of 146 Kosovo Albanian detainees from Serbian prisons to UNMIK. Some of them have been released, while the cases of others are still under consideration. The decision, taken after long-protracted discussions between Belgrade authorities and UNMIK, was a huge step towards building confidence on both sides. We encourage Mr. Steiner and Mr. Čović to continue their good work.

We also note with satisfaction the various steps taken by the High-Ranking Working Group to determine the fate of the missing persons. It is only through constructive dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina that much can be achieved. We therefore encourage the provisional self-government to engage in such dialogue with Belgrade for the benefit of the people of Kosovo.

Finally, we fully agree with the observations of the Secretary-General, as mentioned in his report, on the need for a roadmap for UNMIK and for the provisional self-government before the international community disengages itself from Kosovo. We thank Mr. Steiner for setting the benchmarks that would measure progress in Kosovo's institutional development.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank you, Sir, for the initiative of convening this meeting.

It will be recalled that we said last month that this meeting would provide us with an occasion to make a sort of mini-assessment of the action of the United Nations in Kosovo. We felt it would be appropriate at a given time to measure the distance travelled and, especially, to look to the future by outlining a strategy based on acquired experience and on an unflinching evaluation of that past action. In other words, today's meeting is very important, and we welcome the Deputy Prime Minister to this discussion, all the more so because his important statement contained much valuable information.

We also welcome the presence among us of Mr. Steiner and the chance to benefit from his insight. His briefing was particularly illustrative of all the United Nations comprehensive achievements in the region and it will hold a place of honour among the documents that assist our consideration. We have in the past expressed our thinking on the initiatives and, especially, the philosophy for action of Mr. Steiner. We warmly praise his tact and, especially, his ability to listen. I believe that those qualities have counted for much in the resolution of the crisis and in the creation of a conscientious administration in Kosovo.

We would also underline and welcome the efforts made and measures taken for the creation of a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo. We do so because we are convinced that Kosovo will not be able to achieve its potential unless security, fraternity, tolerance and, especially, respect for difference prevail. Without those qualities — as we have often said — there can be no Kosovo, whose survival depends on the recognition of two elements of which Mr. Steiner has just spoken so forcefully: its multi-ethnic nature and the resulting integration.

We recall the positive qualities of Mr. Steiner's actions and of the Council's action on the ground because they are fully in line with Cameroon's long-standing concerns with respect to the question of Kosovo. We have expressed those concerns in all our preceding statements: strengthening security, disarming armed groups, encouraging the return of all minorities

and reviving lasting economic and social life in Kosovo.

The pursuit and intensification of such activities remain priority issues in that region. We are pleased to see that Mr. Steiner has emphasized them and put them forward as benchmarks. In order for them to be fully implemented, everyone must contribute to the process.

That is why we would like to reiterate our appeal that an end be put to the violence and murder in Kosovo. We call also for the effective participation of all political parties in the process of rebuilding Kosovo — a process that now more than ever requires determined generosity on the part of the international community.

The United Nations set lofty goals for itself in Kosovo, as enshrined in resolution 1244 (1999). It is in duty bound to achieve them, and that is why we consider that we must now focus fully on the benchmarks outlined by Mr. Steiner. If those benchmarks are not consolidated, our efforts will not be productive in the long term.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

Like the other members of the Council, we are pleased to see Deputy Prime Minister Čović here in this Chamber once again. We welcome the specific measures set out in his statement which are being undertaken by Belgrade to promote the comprehensive implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). We also welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Michael Steiner, and we thank him for his very informative and usetul briefing.

Our comprehensive discussion today of the situation in Kosovo is extremely timely. It provides us with an opportunity not only to summarize some of the results of the international efforts that have been deployed in the nearly three years that have elapsed since the adoption of resolution 1244 (1999), but also more clearly to pinpoint the key problems — those that require an immediate solution.

Frankly, the results of the process of implementation of resolution 1244 (1999) are rather contradictory. On the one hand, of course, progress has been achieved in a number of specific areas with respect to Kosovo. Indeed, progress has been made with respect to social and economic aspects and with respect to the question of the establishment of a Police Service. Elections have been held in accordance with the Constitutional Framework. Provisional institutions of self-government have been formed. Yet, at the same time, it must be frankly acknowledged that the improvements taking place in Kosovo are affecting only the Albanian population.

At the same time, an entire subset of substantive problems remain virtually untouched after three years. There is no real security in the region. The process of the return of non-Albanian refugees and internally displaced persons has hardly moved ahead. Organized crime, smuggling and corruption are flourishing. Efforts are being carried out from the territory of Kosovo to destabilize the situation in the south of Serbia and in neighbouring Macedonia.

The situation poses a real threat not only to regional but also to European security. Many have spoken today of the fact that the future of Kosovo is in Europe, so let us reflect on those threats that exist today in Kosovo that are also threats to Europe. Who bears responsibility for all of this? Unquestionably, there are forces in Kosovo that are not interested in a normalization of the situation.

But that responsibility lies first and foremost with the international community — that is, speaking frankly, all of us. We adopted that resolution, and today Kosovo is a de facto international protectorate. I think that we all bear responsibility for seeing that, under our control, a new abcess does not fester on the body of Europe. I hope that we all share that sense of responsibility, and that is how I perceive the fact that Bernard Kouchner came to the opening of today's meeting. He also bears responsibility for what is going on in Kosovo, and he is not indifferent to the situation. I welcome his interest in the resolution of many of the problems that continue to plague the area. It is important for all of us to try to resolve those problems as quickly as possible. First and foremost, we must focus on specific issues that would promote the establishment of a normal living conditions in Kosovo for all of its inhabitants and for all of those who wish to return there.

In one form or another, those objectives have already been noted today in the statements of many of our colleagues, and we are in solidarity with those who have as a priority the war on crime — above all on organized crime; the formation of genuinely

democratic and multi-ethnic interim political, administrative and judicial structures that are free from the sway of extremists and criminal elements; the security and equality of all inhabitants of the region, regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliation; the restraining of political extremism; the return of Serbian and other non-Albanian refugees and internally displaced persons; assistance to inter-community dialogue; the completion of demilitarization and the disarmament of former Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) fighters; the prevention of the militarization of the Kosovo Protection Corps; the stepping up, through international efforts, of interaction with Belgrade; the establishment of dialogue between Belgrade and the leaders of the Kosovo Albanians; and strengthened control by the Security Council over the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and KFOR and the enhancement of their effectiveness.

These problems did not arise today, and progress has been made in resolving some of them. In particular, I should like — aside from those words that have been heard here today regarding the efforts of Michael Steiner — to make positive mention of the actions of KFOR and in particular of its most recent report. We have focused our attention also on the initial efforts that are being undertaken by KFOR to establish border control; the work that is being done with respect to the Kosovo Protection Corps, including the reduction of its staff and the shifting of its activities towards solely civilian objectives; and KFOR's efforts to take illegal weapons away from the population and to put an end to the activities of armed factions and criminal groups. We welcome the stepping up of KFOR's efforts in these areas, and we hope that it will be able to maintain them.

Particular attention should be devoted to the situation in Kosovo-Mitrovica, which is extremely serious. It would probably be possible to resolve this problem in various ways, but we want firmly to state that ultimatums and the use of force in resolving this issue are unacceptable; we have long said this. The problem of Mitrovica also is longstanding, and we have consistently warned that attempts to resolve it through coercion were extremely risky. We are convinced that this approach is correct. Only political means can help to find a way out of this situation.

Incidentally, it is also difficult to count on the full-fledged participation of the Kosovo Serbs in the municipal elections that are set for September. We do not wish to prejudge the results of the efforts that are now being undertaken to find ways to defuse the situation in Mitrovica, but we would like clearly to state that we see as optimal a situation in which there would be two communities established in the city, each with their own municipal bodies, with the relevant competences. Those communities in turn would then delegate representatives to a common municipal institution of self-government.

Recently there has been a great deal of speculation regarding the final status of Kosovo. Studies by the International Crisis Group have been cited today. Of course, that Group has its own point of view, and furthermore it has no responsibility for the situation in Kosovo. But we, however, do bear such responsibility, and that is why I wish to say with all due seriousness that any attempt at this stage to shift this question onto a practical plane is extremely dangerous. This can be done only when the situation in the region has stabilized and when we have seen clear progress in the resolution of those high-priority problems that were touched on today by virtually all members of the Security Council. The necessary conditions for the beginning of the political process are not currently in place, and thus any kind of hasty action can only destabilize the situation in Kosovo and in the region.

A great deal was said today about the benchmarks set out by UNMIK. I welcomed Mr. Steiner's explanation that those benchmarks are by no means designed to indicate a trajectory on the road to Kosovo independence, but rather to ensure conditions that would ensure a normal life for all in the region. I reiterate Mr. Steiner's statement that it is important that this policy be implemented clearly and that no speculation be permitted with regard to such benchmarks in order to advance slogans of independence. Unfortunately, even today, here in this Chamber, such an attempt was made when Kosovo's prospects were referred to in the context of the development of events in East Timor. I believe that such an analogy is wrong and very dangerous.

It is important that what Mr. Steiner has begun — namely, the leadership of the United Nations mission, on a constructive note — continue successfully. Key to that, in our view, is the establishment of effective cooperation between UNMIK's administration and the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The

basis for such cooperation already exists: the Common Document of 5 November 2001 and the coordinated work begun to implement it. We also know that the Special Representative is energetic, persistent and skilled in achieving results, and we are counting on the fact that all of those qualities will be demonstrated in Kosovo in the full and comprehensive implementation of resolution 1244 (1999).

In conclusion, I should like to ask a few questions of Mr. Steiner.

We know that the Kosovo Assembly, at its first meeting on 16 April, through the votes of the Albanian majority attempted virtually to revise some of the provisions of the constitutional framework. At the same meeting, despite the position expressed by the Security Council, doubt was cast on the agreement between the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Macedonia on the demarcation of the border. I should like to know if UNMIK responded to those actions by the Assembly majority.

Many here have welcomed the steps Belgrade has taken to hand over the Albanian prisoners to UNMIK. I should like to ask precisely where those Albanian prisoners are right now.

What is the Special Representative's assessment of the course of and prospects for the investigation by the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia of war crimes perpetrated in Kosovo by Kosovo Liberation Army fighters?

Another question concerns the issue of debts of the enterprises being privatized in Kosovo. We have heard that the international financial organizations estimate that those debts are between $1.2 and $1.4 billion. We also know that some of the loans were guaranteed by the Government of Serbia. The fate of property in Kosovo belonging to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and to Serbia is another issue relating to privatization. I should like to ask how UNMIK is resolving that issue with Belgrade.

I resume my function as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Spain. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Cyprus, Malta, Turkey, Iceland and Liechtenstein also align themselves with this statement.

We welcome the participation of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Steiner, and Mr. Nebojsa Čović, Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, in this Council meeting and thank them for their statements.

I should also like to thank Special Representative Steiner for his leadership in the management of Kosovo's affairs. Over the months of his tenure, he has been able to make important progress on a number of issues. The European Union has already expressed its support for his priorities of laying the foundation for economic development, fighting crime and violence, and building a fair and just society with dignity for all communities. We urge all actors in Kosovo to concentrate their work on those priorities in a manner consistent with resolution 1244 (1999) and the constitutional framework.

These three priorities are closely interrelated. A better functioning economy that improves the living conditions of all Kosovars will undoubtedly encourage refugee returns and discourage further emigration from the province, as well as reduce the causes of crime and violence. At the same time, the establishment of a political culture based on the rule of law and the eradication of organized crime and violence will create an atmosphere more conducive to investment and economic growth as well as to job creation. We welcome the concept, being developed by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, of benchmarks that need to be met to measure progress on the path to the future.

The European Union welcomes the progress towards the formation of the provisional Government. It is essential for Kosovo that the provisional institutions of self-government work effectively in service of the population and represent the multi-ethnic character of the province. We encourage the application of those same principles in the ongoing establishment of a civil service.

The Union has repeatedly stressed the fundamental importance of fighting organized crime and violence. While we welcome the improvement in

the overall security situation, we are greatly concerned at the Secretary-General's affirmation that ethnically motivated attacks continue. Democracy will not be able to take root in Kosovo in an environment of insecurity and fear. We encourage the provisional institutions of self-government and all the parties to do everything possible to end violence and extremism. We condemn the recent violent events in Mitrovica and welcome Deputy Prime Minister Čović's statement that the atmosphere of conflict, distrust and violence must come to an end.

We support UNMIK in its efforts to establish its full authority in the north of Mitrovica. We have also welcomed the transfer to UNMIK by the Belgrade authorities of Kosovo Albanians imprisoned in the Republic of Serbia as a very positive step that will contribute to creating confidence among the communities in Kosovo. The Union urges all the parties to continue cooperating constructively in the other areas of interest provided for in the UNMIK-Yugoslavia Common Document, in particular to accelerate the process of determining the fate of missing persons of all communities.

We welcome the work undertaken by UNMIK in coordination with Belgrade to enable the return of all refugees and internally displaced persons to Kosovo. The past few years have demonstrated that, when favourable conditions are created on the ground, especially for the return of minorities, progress can be achieved quickly. More than 1 million people are still displaced in the region as the result of the conflict, and all regional actors must spare no effort to create the necessary legislative and security conditions for return and to allocate the resources to ensure its sustainability.

Let me take this opportunity to reiterate our call on the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to fulfil their international obligation of full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. That cooperation, along with the affirmation of civilian control over the military, will move Serbia and Montenegro one step closer to European integration.

The European Union welcomes the South-East European Cooperation Process summit in Tirana on 28 March and commends its members' wish to further enhance regional cooperation. The rapprochement with the European Union goes hand in hand with the process of developing regional cooperation, which constitutes one of the main targets of the stabilization and association process.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Albania, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Nesho (Albania), took a seat at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Ukraine. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine): I should like first of all to thank you, Sir, for arranging this important public meeting on Kosovo. We appreciate your initiative to hold an open debate on a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). To look beyond the present developments on the ground, to make an effort to overview the current results and to approach a consolidated vision of Kosovo's prospects — this is an ambitious and difficult task.

While this idea can eventually become another benchmark on the Security Council's agenda, my delegation would like to contribute to the discussion and to outline what we think are the challenges and prospects ahead.

I am glad to welcome here the Deputy Prime Minister of the Yugoslav constituent Republic of Serbia, Mr. Nebojša Čović, and to thank him for his lucid statement and important messages and, in particular, for sharing with us his vision of the future status of Kosovo.

My special thanks also go to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Michael Steiner, whose energetic and result-oriented approaches we highly appreciate. On behalf of the Government of Ukraine, I would like to express our full support for the

priorities outlined in his statement and to pledge our full cooperation. I hope that what we have accomplished today, no less than what we have failed to accomplish, will encourage and help both Mr. Steiner and Mr. Čović in their efforts to tackle the present problems in Kosovo.

My delegation supports the statement made by the representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union.

In our view, the current situation in Kosovo should be looked at foremost from the standpoint of accomplishing the main tasks of the international security and civil presence there. Despite a considerable number of critical comments made today, one can see that the general tendency in assessing the current political situation in Kosovo is quite positive. The records of the recent meetings on Kosovo clearly indicate that, on the majority of the internal Kosovo bedrock issues, the Council members are close to consensus. Our optimism is also based on the progress achieved by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in establishing self-governing institutions in Kosovo, in strengthening the rule of law, in developing cooperation with the Yugoslav authorities and in fighting organized crime. Ukraine welcomes and recognizes all these results.

At the same time, we remain deeply concerned over the critical situation in the area of the return and protection of national minorities, which might require, in our view, a completely new strategy. In this regard, we call on UNMIK to pay particular attention to implementing confidence-building measures between all national communities in Kosovo and, together with KFOR, to taking robust steps to further improve the security environment in the province. We also appeal to the Kosovo self-governing institutions and all Kosovo leaders to actively promote security and returns and to vehemently combat extremism in all its forms and manifestations.

It might seem to be quite a paradox, but in settling the Kosovo issue, the international community still lacks the most important tool: a general vision and a single comprehensive strategy on the future of Kosovo as a multi-ethnic society. Though the wide range of tasks outlined in resolution 1244 (1999) is in the process of completion, today it is practically impossible to assess general progress in the province and, in many cases, UNMIK and KFOR remain in the position of so-called firefighters on an ad hoc basis.

In such circumstances, all the positive elements of the Security Council's deliberations on the Kosovo issue and all the appeals to establish a secure environment and to promote a climate of law and order can easily be considered as some kind of snapshot, as Ambassador Mahbubani of Singapore called it during one of our previous debates on Kosovo. In this regard, I cannot but cite a number of conclusions reached by the International Crisis Group (ICG) in its recent report, "A Kosovo Roadmap":

> "In order to move towards a resolution of Kosovo's final status, two distinct aspects need to be considered: an 'external' and an 'internal' dimension. The 'external' dimension involves devising a process to address final status, including all of the different actors with a stake in Kosovo's future. The 'internal' dimension concerns the development of Kosovo's own democratic institutions, the rule of law and human rights, so as to prepare Kosovo for whatever final status may eventually be agreed."

As the ICG mentions, these two parallel paths need to be negotiated simultaneously in order to reach the desired destination: a stable, democratic Kosovo standing on its own feet, peacefully integrated into its region and with a clearly defined place in the international community. My delegation does not support all the conclusions reached by the Group, but we believe that, in the future, there will be a need to start elaborating a common comprehensive vision of possible ways to ensure a democratic, multi-ethnic society in Kosovo.

From our viewpoint, this strategy has to reflect the further commitment of the international community to political and economic stabilization in Kosovo. We believe that it should include the concept of performance standards outlined today by Special Representative Steiner. It should also encourage a stable partnership between the self-governing institutions of Kosovo and the Yugoslav authorities and strengthen the dialogue between Kosovo Albanians, Kosovo Serbs and other national minorities in the province.

Ukraine welcomes the recent progress achieved by UNMIK in the formation of the executive bodies of the provisional institutions of self-government of

Kosovo. In particular, we commend the readiness of all the communities to participate in their activities and to promote an inter-communal confidence-building dialogue.

My delegation considers the recent transfer of the Kosovo Albanian detainees from Serbia to Kosovo to be an important step in this regard. We fully support the view that attention should now be turned to accelerating the process of determining the fate of missing persons of all communities.

As UNMIK enters a new, potentially more dangerous phase in the sphere of anti-crime activities, my delegation expresses its full support for the Mission and calls for all necessary measures to be taken to combat organized crime and terrorism in the province. We also note with satisfaction the clear vision outlined by Mr. Steiner of Kosovo's economic priorities, aimed at reviving the economy and creating new jobs. International assistance and help is greatly required for these tasks, which are among the most burning issues in the province.

Finally, in pledging our support to Mr. Steiner and his team, I would like to conclude by quoting his famous compatriot, renowned poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who once said:

> "Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness ... Concerning all acts of initiative and creation, there is one elementary truth, ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commi oneself, then providence moves too ... Whatever you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now."

The President (*spoke in Russian*): We can be guided by that quotation in our work on many other issues.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Albania. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Nesho (Albania): Let me first congratulate you, Sir, on the enormous amount of excellent work being done by your delegation during your presidency of the Security Council this month with regard to the situation in the Middle East, as well as to other matters.

At the same time, let me welcome the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Michael Steiner. My delegation fully supports the statement that he made today. Albania commends the great work that he has done — even though he has spent such little time in the country — as well as his foresight, maturity, professionalism and determination to carry out the difficult task of creating a democratic, multi-ethnic society in Kosovo, ready to be integrated at some point in the future into the European family.

As you mentioned in a previous Security Council meeting, Mr. President, during today's discussion we will review the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). My delegation would like to take this opportunity to make several comments. Kosovo is a success story for the United Nations and the international community. We saved the nation from the obscure genocidal philosophy of the previous regime. Reconciliation between the people, which was desirable but difficult to arrive at, has been achieved. We are in the process of creating democratic institutions. Finally, there are provisional institutions of self-government able to respond to the will of the people and to take responsibility.

My Government fully supports the work done so far by UNMIK, as well as its future activity. We support the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Steiner. It is essential for all the parties involved in the region to fully support them in the successful implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). We believe that the important — indeed, essential — message of that resolution, the message sent by the international community, is not about who will rule or reign over Kosovo, but about the creation of democratic institutions and the future of a multi-ethnic society there, one in which the people can speak freely and, Albanian and Serb together, choose their future.

We would like to note that democratic activities and a democratic attitude are the responsibility of a Government to its people and do not entail the right of that Government to be compensated by the international community. At the same time, we would like once again to stress that the old ideas of creating a greater Serbia, a greater Croatia or a greater Albania belong to history; no one should re-activate them. These provocative ideas are dangerously reborn when

one party is a slave to the past, as reflected in its policy towards Kosovo and the region.

In conclusion, we would like to say that Albania fully supports the activities of the Special Representative, Mr. Steiner, and we believe that there will continue to be progress in Kosovo in the future, for the benefit of peace and security in the region, as well as for the international community as a whole. At the same time, we would like to stress that, in future Security Council meetings on this subject, elected representatives from Kosovo should be present, in addition to Mr. Steiner.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the representative of Albania for his kind words addressed to me.

Despite the lateness of the hour, I would like to give the floor first to Mr. Steiner, and then to Mr. Čović, for their final comments.

Mr. Steiner: Let me first thank all the speakers here in the Council for the support that I have received for the concept of priorities and benchmarks. Let me say, too, that of course the situation is not easy and there is no doubt that we still have serious shortcomings. Deputy Prime Minister Čović has rightly pointed out the fact that freedom of movement for non-majority communities is still in a very unsatisfactory state. That is one of the reasons why freedom of movement for all is part of the benchmarks concept.

Let me just respond briefly to the specific points that have been mentioned. First, on the transfer of prisoners, I join those who have commended the step taken by Belgrade to transfer prisoners, after two and a half years, to Kosovo, where they legally belong. The agreement that Mr. Čović and I both signed relates to how we will deal with these cases — specifically, cases within Kosovo — in the future. We have identified 16 prisoners who fall under the terms of the agreement, which is shaped in accordance with the European agreement on the transfer of prisoners. We and lawyers from Belgrade have asked these prisoners whether they want to leave. We cannot force them; that is something which needs to be done voluntarily. Unfortunately, I must say that so far not one has taken up this opportunity to be transferred to a prison in Serbia proper. We are ready, of course, if the prisoners agree, to follow this up expeditiously.

Let me also say a word about Mitrovica, as it has been mentioned by the representative of China and others. I think we need to keep the facts straight. On 8 April, policemen doing their jobs were attacked — not only with stones, but also with bullets and hand grenades. Twenty-two were wounded and, as has already been said, one seriously. By the way, that is the reason why Polish Prime Minister Miller went to northern Kosovo a day later to express his solidarity with UNMIK. So here, on this issue, we are talking simply of criminal acts. We cannot respond to those acts with agreements on horizontal redrawings of maps, on whatever level, or by taking action against the proceedings of international judges.

As I have outlined several times, what is necessary first in Mitrovica is a calming of the situation. We also need to have an unhindered international presence in the north, including international police. Once we have the situation there normalized and we have an international presence as prescribed by resolution 1244 (1999) — and of course the Serb community also has legitimate interests and concerns — we can talk about the delegation of competencies to municipalities and about the re-assessment of the operations of local communities.

But first things first. When we talk about Mitrovica, we should not forget the facts. Mitrovica is a municipality with 130,000 inhabitants. Ninety per cent of the inhabitants of Mitrovica are non-Serbs. If one looks at the news coming from that area today, I am being heavily criticized for not moving forward in avoiding parallel structures and in deploying the international presence everywhere, including the north. One has to see that for every action there is an opposite reaction. One also has to see that we need to support others living in the municipality.

I think that the answer — and my understanding in our discussions with Mr. Čović was that, in essence, we agree on this — cannot be one of horizontal division. The answer must be a vertical answer on decentralization. That must be something that happens in the whole of Kosovo. I also think that we need economic help and that small and medium businesses in the north should be helped. I would be very grateful if Belgrade would support, and continue to support, such an approach to decentralization once we have calmed the situation.

Return was mentioned as one of the core issues we need to address, and I totally agree. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has put the official number of minority Serbs, Bosniacs and others who have returned so far at 453,000. That is not enough by far. This is an issue on which we must now put priority. I think we have a chance to do that, because for the first time we can follow an integrated approach. If we have finally nominated a Serb coordinator for returns within the Government; if we have nominated a senior adviser on returns for my Office from among the Kosovo Serbs; if we see that, while the climate on the ground is still difficult, it has changed; and if one listens to what Prime Minister Rexhepi is telling the mayors out there in Kosovo about returns — then that is good news. We have the right messages going out to Kosovo from the provisional institutions. Now, if we have the institutions, the representatives and the Serbs involved in an integrated approach on return, and if we do it together with Belgrade — which has to play a decisive role here because most of the internally displaced persons are, of course, in Serbia proper — if all those factors are working together, I think we have a chance. For one thing is also clear, 2002 and next year will be decisive when it comes to returns.

Let me now answer your specific questions, Mr. President.

With regard to the Agreement between Belgrade and Skopje on the borders and the position of the Assembly and the institutions, I have made UNMIK's position clear on every occasion in Pristina and in Skopje. In March of last year, the Security Council called for respect for that Agreement. I have said to everyone who wants to hear it and to those who do not want to hear it that that is also the position of UNMIK. Now, if there are different views — and that is something I cannot forbid — that is one thing, but I have also made it clear to the provisional institutions that they have no competence as provisional institutions to take any decisions to the contrary. If the Assembly discusses these issues, I cannot hinder it, but what I can and will hinder, as I have told Mr. Čović, is any decision by the Assembly in this area, because it is an area of reserved power and not for the Assembly.

Mr. President, you have asked where the prisoners are. Those who have been found guilty by international judges of having committed the crimes of murder, stealing and so on are in prison in the north-east of Kosovo, and they will stay there. After a review and decision by international judges, those who have been found not guilty have been or will be released. Every step we are taking here we are taking together with the international judges.

You have also asked, Mr. President, about the status of the review of possible war crimes. You must understand that I cannot disclose judicial processes here, but let me say one thing very clearly. First, Carla del Ponte was in Pristina about a week ago and said that the court is currently investigating three cases concerning Kosovo. We will see what the outcome is in that case. If there is an indictment — of whomever and on whatever charge, whether of a member of the Kosovo Liberation Army in Kosovo or not — we will arrest that person. That is our role. We are duty-bound to do it and we will do it.

Finally, with regard to the question of privatization and property of the Federal Republic or Serbia, it is highly disputed who owns what. This is the reason why, in our draft legislation on the Kosovo Transfer Agency, we have frozen the whole question of ownership. We will introduce an economic framework that can boost the economy without addressing or interfering with the question of who owns what. We have simply frozen the question. It is too complicated to solve now and, were we to wait for a solution to it before solving the problem of property, we would not get the economy going. We simply do not have the time to do that in a situation where financial contributions from donors are declining and the international presence is being downscaled.

The representative of Singapore addressed, as have others, the issue of final status and referred, as Mr. Čović has, to the report of a very active organization which follows the situation in Kosovo. Let me be very clear on this issue. Yes, we will have to address this issue when the time is right, under resolution 1244 (1999), paragraph 11. We will do so in the form of a dialogue with Belgrade, of course. But I continue to believe that the time for that has not yet come. I think that we need to do first things first. My philosophy on this issue would be standards first, then status. That means we need to do our homework now.

That is what the people in Kosovo want too, irrespective of whether they are Serbs, Kosovo Albanians, Bosniacs or others. What do these people want? Do not forget that more than 50 per cent of the

population is under the age of 23. They are young people. They want jobs, reliable institutions and security. Those are the issues that we need to address first.

I firmly believe that if we address those benchmarks — even if not in an ideal way — which will still take time, the question of how we should address and discuss the question of the final issue will be much easier. But that is not the issue for the moment. I think we have to concentrate on the things that the population expects of us. I talk to these people constantly. No one asks me about the final status. Politicians may, but not normal people. Normal people want to have electricity, security, jobs and their normal, decent living. That is what we are there to address first. That is why I frankly believe that prematurely addressing final status issues would not help us in the current situation.

Finally, sometimes in the evening I, too, am pessimistic and am concerned at our slow progress on the issues that the Council has rightly mentioned. But there is something that comforts me. I think that we have three allies. The first ally — and forgive me for saying so, but it is true — is the Secretary-General of the Organization. To have the support for this enormous Mission from the Secretary-General and from the Secretariat here in practice is extremely helpful to us.

The second ally is the Security Council, representing the international community. The Council support for what we are doing — as we report to it in the hope that the Council supports our philosophy and line of action — is quite a powerful tool. I must say that so far I am very encouraged and that it is helpful to have this support.

In my analysis, the third ally is the population of Kosovo. That is true for the majority population, the Kosovo Albanians, and for the Kosovo Serbs and the others, because we have the same aims. They want a decent, secure life, and that is how we see our task. Of course, we also address the question of the region and the many practical issues we have with Belgrade. But I think that we have a common line and common goals. For that reason, I think we have a real chance to do our work, which is, in the end, to help create a respectable, inclusive society. Anyway, we have no alternative, and we have to continue along this path.

I just want to thank you once again for all the expressions of support that the Council has made today. It is very encouraging as I go back to Kosovo tomorrow.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Čović.

Mr. Čović (Yugoslavia) (*spoke in Serbian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): We would like to extend our appreciation for the understanding the two of us received. However, it sometimes seems as if we were talking about two different Kosovos.

I would like to comment on some of the questions. We are fully in favour of cooperation with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), but we want it to be sincere cooperation based on mutual respect and not on the optics of the past, when we had an undemocratic regime in Belgrade. The Council will agree, I hope, that we will continue to live in the area. We will have to take responsibility for that. With due respect for Mr. Steiner, and all the support we will give him, we have to emphasize that he will finish his mission and leave, while we will stay to share the destiny of the nations in the region. We are truly grateful for all the support and effort of the international community to solve the crisis in the region.

With respect to the integration of Kosovo and Metohija, there will be no integration without respect for fundamental human rights, and the fundamental human right is the right to return home. There can be no freedom of movement without security and without addressing the problem of crime.

In this part of the world, the connection between crime and politics is deeply rooted. I fully concur with Mr. Steiner's invitation to the members of the Council to visit Kosovo, and I would greatly appreciate it if at that time we could together visit Serbian enclaves, spending not just an afternoon or a couple of hours there. I suggest that we spend the night there and spend lots of time with them to see how they live in those enclaves. I think that would put us in a better position to address their concerns.

We are fully prepared to support the integration process. However, with regard to privatization, we know who owes whom and we know that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has the responsibility of paying

pensions to the retirees. However, we also know that we have had a lot of investment made by different funds and we know how much those companies in Kosovo owe to international organizations. The overall debt totals about $1.5 billion. We in Belgrade have to pay all the instalments at a time when the commercialization is being carried out in Kosovo. I think that this is a problem, and I hope that sometime next week we will be able to find a joint approach on this issue.

We support the position of Singapore that at a certain time benchmarks should be used for the assessment of the success of UNMIK and KFOR on the ground. I am very happy to hear about the concept of benchmarks. I regret that Mr. Steiner and I did not have the opportunity to discuss this issue earlier. Some people would say that Belgrade and Pristina did not have a chance to discuss the issue earlier.

I regret that Mr. Steiner and I did not have the opportunity to discuss this issue earlier. Some would say that Belgrade and Pristina did not have a chance to discuss this issue earlier either.

We now have certain benchmarks, and we believe that those relating to regional harmonization must be interconnected. I am glad that we have these benchmarks, as well as agencies that will work to achieve them and a time-frame for their use. I believe that we will be able to achieve these goals, and we are genuinely interested in being fully included in the further detailed development of these benchmarks. We hope that they will not prejudge the final status of Kosovo. I was very pleased to hear Mr. Steiner speaking about this and saying that he felt that this was not the time to talk about the future status of Kosovo.

We support all of the positive statements made by certain members of the Kosovo Government, and we hope that those statements will bear fruit. In that regard, we hope also that we will be able to facilitate the return to Kosovo of a substantive number of those Serbs that have been internally displaced.

In regard to Kosovo-Mitrovica, we do not support any violence or conflict. We do not support any provocation, poor command or any statements made by police commanders who say that they have to fight against "Serbian animals". I do not think that anything can be solved in south-eastern Europe through the use of force.

Let me assure the Council that if the only problem in Kosovo had been Kosovska Mitrovica, we would have been able to resolve it easily. We are fully committed to this, and we have presented our approach to the resolution of the situation in Kosovska Mitrovica. We are not speaking of any horizontal solution, division or partition. The issue here is that we have to help ethnic communities to live normally and exercise their rights.

Believe me: it will be very difficult to resolve the issue of Kosovska Mitrovica if we do not find a way to decentralize the Government in Kosovo and Metohija and if we do not find a way to establish new local institutions of self-government — one of them in the north of Kosovska Mitrovica.

I am sure that if we cannot create normal living conditions in Kosovska Mitrovica, we will have no parallel institutions whatsoever. This is not the only threat, however, because another problem is that the people who live there have no confidence in us either. That is a fact.

We are transferring Albanian prisoners from detention facilities in Serbia proper to Kosovo and Metohija. At our last meeting, I announced that I would recommend that Serbian Return Coalition (Povratak) accept Mr. Steiner's proposal to join the Government. This has been done.

Regarding the transfer of Serbian detainees from facilities in Kosovo and Metohija, I am sorry to note that we have different approaches. Out of 17 detainees, seven declared their desire to be transferred to prisons in Serbia proper. Three were released because they had served their time, one will be released on 17 May, and five do not wish to be transferred from Kosovo and Metohija to Serbia proper. The other is an Albanian who wanted to stay in prison in Serbia proper. All of them are common criminals.

However, what we have not mentioned today is the fact that we are holding nine Serbs in prison in Kosovo and Metohija. In these cases, the Supreme Court of Kosovo overruled the first-instance decisions. In all of the cases, the investigating judges and public prosecutors were Albanians, and we hope that these Serb detainees will also be transferred as soon as possible.

It is not only UNMIK that needs to succeed in its mission. Belgrade must also succeed, and therefore we

must jointly work on all of these issues. I must state my concern about the situation in Kosovo. Any instability, any hasty moves concerning final-status issues could have a very negative impact and destroy the democratic authorities in Belgrade.

I think that confidence-building measures are essential in this process and that the benchmarks that are being created must also address confidence-building measures between different ethnic communities. We cannot be forever taking vengeance against each other.

We regret that fact that Polish policemen were injured. I personally have had contact with senior Polish politicians, and on the day when the Polish Prime Minister visited Kosovo, I was there with the Polish Ambassador. Although it had originally been planned that the Polish Prime Minister and I would meet, that did not happen. I hope that UNMIK police will improve their command, and we are there to render our support in that regard.

Concerning the return of internally displaced persons, one need only look at our returns programme, which has largely been coordinated with the UNMIK Office of Returns and Communities. I hope that we will be able to make some progress. We need funds, and the budgets of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and of the Republic of Serbia have already earmarked and set aside certain funds. To that end, I would ask the Council kindly for its support and assistance, so that we can start this process and make progress as soon as possible.

We believe that the Albanian detainees who were released based on the files that we transferred to the UNMIK judiciary must remain in custody. The UNMIK judiciary decided that they should remain in custody, and this should definitely be the case because international legality reaffirmed the original judgment. We hope that the same principles will be applied to the Mazreku brothers.

With regard to the war crimes, I look forward to progress being made in Kosovo with respect to cooperation with the Hague Tribunal. We believe that existing and potential indictees and their files will not be used to discipline some Albanian leaders, to try to blackmail them into engaging in constructive cooperation in Kosovo.

We should like to express our sincere appreciation for all the support and understanding shown by the Security Council. We are fully committed to the further improvement of living conditions in Kosovo. However, we appeal to the Council to bear in mind that resolution 1244 (1999) is still in force and that Kosovo and Metohija is still a part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia.

We want to be good hosts and to receive constructive input in the process of finding a solution to the problems in Kosovo. However, I am afraid that we will not be able to share in the responsibility if we are not treated as an equal partner in this cooperative effort. I regret that when Mr. Steiner spoke of three allies, he failed to mention Belgrade as a fourth ally. However, I hope and believe that one day, Belgrade will come to be that fourth ally in finding a solution to the problems in Kosovo.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 2.05 p.m.